

BRIEF

The Kazakhs, one of the major Turkic peoples in the USSR, live in a strategic area in the heart of Soviet Central Asia. There are evidences of deep and continuing conflict between their way of life and the policies imposed upon them by the Soviet Communists. This study was intended to describe those sources of conflict and to indicate their implications for psychological warfare. A secondary objective of the study was to determine how well the vulnerability of a people inaccessible to direct methods of research can be assessed.

The traditional Kazakh way of life is pastoral nomadism; they abhor the settled farming life. Their customs and values reflect this independent heritage, and the Soviet drive during the 1930's to collectivize the nomads met with resistance. Between 1926 and 1939, the Kazakhs suffered a net population loss of almost one million—nearly one-fourth of their number in 1926. This loss was the result of starvation and disease, mass arrests and liquidations, flight across the border, and migration to neighboring Turkic peoples and to the urban and industrial areas of Siberia, all factors indirectly attributable to the imposition of Soviet control.

The organization of Kazakh society according to kin groups has been an important factor in contact with the Soviets. It has eased Kazakh transition to collective life, since most collective farms comprise single groups of blood relatives, but at the same time the closeness of the family ties has frequently led to the charge of nepotism by the Soviets.

The nativistic revival of Kazakh interest in their traditional heroes and customs was encouraged by the Soviets as a wartime morale measure. This revival—at once political, religious, and cultural in nature—became so strong that the Soviets considered it a threat and have attempted to suppress it. The importance of blood ties to the Kazakhs heightened their resentment of Soviet condemnation of their national heroes, whom they regard also as their ancestors. The Kazakhs' veneration of their past history and culture is fostered by their native religion, a blend of ancestor worship and shamanism. This folk religion is not formally organized. Administratively, the Soviets treat the Kazakhs as Moslems, although it is difficult to say how much Islam has influenced the rural Kazakhs.

The Kazakhs appear to be making only a minimal contribution to important republic activities which the Soviets are trying to encourage—industry and transport, Party and government. One explanation may be that the Kazakhs are not given equal opportunities; there is some evidence that the Slavs regard them as inferiors. Another reason is that the Kazakhs are coming forward for *education and advancement*. Antagonistically they prefer to keep apart from the Slavic population of the republic; this conclusion is supported by the low rate of intermarriage between the two peoples. The Kazakhs appear to be opposed to many aspects of Sovietization, but at present their resistance is largely passive.

The local press proved to be a most useful source of information in the present study. The reports of local reactions and activities in relation to the official Party line provided many indications of strengths and weaknesses, trouble spots and failures. In addition to this source, research methods from many disciplines were combined to utilize all available data and information.

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reliability is essential for advancement, the Slavs are understandably hesitant to place the Kazakhs in positions of responsibility and trust, whether this involves "family relations" or not. The second reason is that the Kazakhs simply are not coming forward to be trained and promoted. This is seen especially in the virtual absence of Kazakh women in positions of any responsibility. Here Kazakh and Communist values are completely opposite. In theory, if not in practice, Soviet women are considered the equals of men, whereas the Kazakhs, in both theory and actuality, keep their women in a very subordinate status. But it is also apparent that the men themselves are not becoming any more involved than they have to in the activities most emphasized by the Soviets, and where they can they are holding onto their old values and traditional way of life, meeting the Soviet demands with essentially passive resistance.

It must be presumed that Kazakh participation in Soviet affairs will increase over time under the continuing pressure exerted. Nevertheless, the Sovietization of the Kazakhs remains sufficiently unsatisfactory, after nearly 40 years of effort expended in this direction, to provide assurance that the process is far from complete.

The nonparticipation of Kazakhs in Soviet developments presents a serious dilemma not only for the regime as a whole but also for the local Communist Party. The primary function of the Party in the Soviet system is to inspire or coerce the people to ever greater efforts toward the goals specified by the regime. Although the Party "carries a big stick," and is supported in this by the entire apparatus of the State, including the secret police, it is obvious that coercion alone is not sufficient to maintain a consistently high rate of output in the daily activities of any people. For this reason the Party uses the carrot as well as the stick, and the various devices used to stimulate production and increase enthusiasm for Soviet objectives are, with the majority of USSR citizens, quite effective. Whatever their real feelings toward the regime and its policies, these citizens see no alternative to living within the framework of Soviet society and making their way in accordance with its standards.

The Kazakhs, on the other hand, feel they do have an alternative—their old way of life and its deeply entrenched values, which are still very much alive. This is not the road to riches, but few of them have ever had reason to hope for riches. As a result the Kazakhs generally put forth only the minimum necessary effort. Not only do they have little interest in industry and transport, but their output is consistently below expectations in agriculture and even in herding, their traditional occupation.

Thus the Party, under constant pressure from Moscow to increase output, finds itself equipped with techniques for encouraging production which are not adapted to dealing with a people who do not view their integration into Soviet society as inevitable. There remain only force and coercion, but these cannot be applied steadily enough to be effective with an entire people. When force was tried during the collectivization drive of the 1930's, the result was a net loss in production from which the economy of Kazakhstan has never fully recovered. Actually, the purges of which the western world is aware tend to be directed more toward the overwhelmingly Slavic membership of the Party, caught on the horns of its dilemma, than toward the Kazakhs who are the cause of the difficulty.